



Minutes of a meeting of Full Council held in the Town Hall, Chippenham on 22 September 2021 at 7pm.

**Councillors present:**

Desna Allen	Liz Alstrom (Vice Chair)
Declan Baseley	James Bradbury
Jenny Budgell	Clare Cape
Pete Cousins	Bill Douglas
Robert Giles	Gemma Grimes
Angie Litvak-Watson	Kathryn Macdermid
Nick Murry	David Poole
Nic Puntis	Chris Ruck
John Scragg (Chairman)	Matthew Short
George Simmonds	Myla Watts
Hayley Wilson	

**Officers present:** Mark Smith, Chief Executive  
Matt Kirby, Director of Community Services  
Lynsey Nichols, Head of Communications and Customer Service  
Helen Bywater, Head of Corporate Support  
Andy Conroy, Head of Planning  
Paul Harvey, Head of Leisure Services  
Will Tidmarsh, Head of Environmental Services  
Gillian Ballinger, Head of Finance  
Heather Rae, Head of Democratic Services  
Michael Weeks, Democratic and Civic Officer  
Amy Abram, Management Accounts Apprentice  
Kingsley Walker, Halls Team

**Public present:** There were 5 members of the public present.

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were two written questions and two verbal questions from members of the public, which are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX A**. The responses to these questions were not part of the meeting but are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX B**.

**36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mary Norton due to ill health and Councillors Andy and Nina Phillips due to personal reasons.

**37. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**38. MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting held on 19 May 2021 with one amendment to include one omitted representation to outside bodies and the draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021 were proposed by Councillor Desna Allen and seconded by Councillor Liz Alstrom with all in favour, it was;

**RESOLVED that:**

The amended minutes from the meeting held on 19 May 2021 and the minutes from the meeting held on 16 June 2021 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

**39. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

i. a) The Mayor highlighted applications for the Chippenham Youth Council are open to all young people who live or go to School in Chippenham or the surrounding areas. The details are on the Chippenham Town Council website and the Town Council can be contacted for further details.

b) The Mayor reminded all present of the virtual Climate Conversation on 'Water Conservation' on Wednesday 29 September at 7pm on Zoom. Further details including registration are on the Eventbrite page.

ii. The list of engagements undertaken by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor since the last meeting of the council held on Wednesday 16 June 2021 were noted.

**40. POLICE REPORT**

The Inspector updated on the current policing priorities within the Chippenham area including anti-social behaviour, increased enforcement, increased violent crime, preventative work, speeding, car meets and County Lines. The Chairman thanked the Inspector for attending the meeting and answering Councillor questions.

**RESOLVED that:**

The update be noted.

**The Inspector left the meeting**

**41. COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**a. Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 08 September 2021 were presented by Councillor James Bradbury with all matters resolved.

b. Planning, Environment and Transport Committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 June, 15 July, 05 August and 26 August 2021 were presented by Councillor Gemma Grimes with all matters resolved.

c. Strategy and Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 01 September 2021 were presented by Councillor Myla Watts with all matters resolved.

d. Human Resources Committee

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 16 June 2021 and the meeting held on 02 September 2021 were presented by Councillor Desna Allen with all matters resolved.

42. YOUTH COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED that:

The minutes from the Youth Council meetings held on 14 June and 30 June 2021 were noted.

43. CLIMATE EMERGENCY - CONSULTANCY RESOURCE

The Director of Community Services presented the report regarding the Climate Emergency and engaging a consultant. It was proposed by Councillor Nic Puntis, seconded by Councillor Matthew Short and with all in favour, it was;

RESOLVED that:

The commissioning of the Climate Change Consultant to undertake the works outlined within **APPENDIX A** of the report at a cost of £24,620, over and above the current agreed budget for 2021/22 be approved.

44. ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY MOTION - ACTION PLAN AND BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Chief Executive presented the report regarding an action plan and related budgetary implications of implementing the Ecological Emergency motion.

Councillor Jenny Budgell raised concerns over the budget setting process and whether the requirement to propose a budget to Full Council in January would be met. It was highlighted that expectations should be managed, and resources need to be looked at.

Councillor Myla Watts proposed an amendment to the recommendations of the report, it was seconded by Councillor Kathryn Macdermid. Councillors debated the amendment and the proposer and seconder agreed minor changes to the wording to put forward the following amendment to the vote: *“That Councillors note the report and:*

- 1. Confirm that they wish to deliver the aspirations contained within the adopted Ecological Emergency motion, with the aim of not increasing the precept charge beyond the normal inflationary increase; and*
- 2. That officers report back to the next suitable S&R and Full Council meeting, and following the outcome of the next Financial Sub Committee meeting, on*

*which objectives may have to be delayed in being implemented as a result of other financial priorities.”*

A vote was taken and with all in favour, it was;

**RESOLVED that:**

Councillors noted the report and:

- i. Confirmed that they wish to deliver the aspirations contained within the adopted Ecological Emergency motion, with the aim of not increasing the precept charge beyond the normal inflationary increase; and
- ii. Requested officers report back to the next suitable Strategy and Resources and Full Council meeting, and following the outcome of the next Financial Sub Committee meeting, on which objectives may have to be delayed in being implemented as a result of other financial priorities.

**45. DECLARATION OF OFFICE**

The Head of Democratic Services highlighted that Councillor Mary Norton was unable to sign the Declaration of Office due to ill health. Councillors were asked to consider a further extension, a vote was taken and with the majority in favour, it was;

**RESOLVED that:**

Councillors agreed that Councillor Mary Norton may sign the Declaration of Office at a later date prior to the next meeting of Council on 24 November 2021. If this does not happen, it will be put on the agenda for consideration again at the meeting on 24 November 2021.

**46. COUNCILLOR MOTIONS**

**i) COUNCILLOR MOTION 1**

Councillor Declan Baseley presented the Councillor motion regarding encouraging sheltering of refugees in Chippenham. The motion was seconded by Councillor Angie Litvak-Watson, there was one amendment to include thanks and congratulations to Wiltshire Council in the letter. With all in favour, it was;

**RESOLVED that:**

Although Chippenham Town Council are unable to allocate council housing, Councillors supported the motion that the Chief Executive of the Town Council write a letter to the Chief Executive of Wiltshire Council to congratulate them on work already undertaken and express our shared view that Chippenham will gladly house as many refugees as feasibly possible, in the same manner as they have done in the past for displaced people under similar circumstance. This will be subject to the availability of the housing stock under the control of Wiltshire Council as the Statutory Housing Authority. Chippenham Town Council will endeavour to work collaboratively with Wiltshire Council and other third parties on this issue in accordance with our scope of control and

available resources. We hope that Chippenham can set an example as one of the largest towns in Wiltshire for the rest of our county to follow. Let our town display proudly its solidarity with the Afghan people, and its commitment to easing the burden of this unfolding humanitarian crisis.

#### **ii) COUNCILLOR MOTION 2**

Councillor Nick Murry presented the Councillor motion regarding a request to Wiltshire Council to engage with the Town Council on revised housing numbers and Spatial Strategy for Chippenham. The motion was seconded by Councillor Clare Cape and with all in favour, it was;

#### **RESOLVED that:**

The Chief Executive of the Town Council submit a letter to Wiltshire Council's Corporate Director - Place, requesting a workshop style meeting between appropriate members of Wiltshire Council's Spatial Planning team and all Chippenham's Town Councillors who are able to attend. The aim of the meeting would be to allow Councillors to be updated on Wiltshire Council's plans for the town in terms of housing numbers and locations, for issues and options to be presented, questions to be asked and the views of Town Councillors to be recorded, so they can be taken into account at a formative stage of the plan. The meeting would be chaired/ facilitated by the Mayor and supported by the Director of Community Services and the Head of Planning. The letter should include a request for this to take place as soon as possible and sufficiently in advance of proposals being firmed up for the Regulation 19 (Draft Plan) consultation in the early part of 2022.

#### **iii) COUNCILLOR MOTION 3**

Councillor Nick Murry presented the Councillor motion regarding a request for officers to investigate setting up a Climate Emergency Fund. The motion was seconded by Councillors Declan Baseley and Kathryn Macdermid, there was one amendment to change the proposal of the next Full Council meeting to the next suitable Full Council meeting within this financial year. With all in favour, it was;

#### **RESOLVED that:**

Officers to investigate and report back to the next suitable Full Council meeting within this financial year on a suitable mechanism and means of organising a Climate Emergency Fund, with a view to establishing it in the next financial year, subject to approval of the necessary budget by Full Council.

**At 8.55pm, the Chairman highlighted Standing Order 15.7 relating to finishing meetings within a two hour period by 9pm, and asked Councillors whether they would vote to continue the meeting to a reasonable time to finish the business within the agenda, with all in favour, the meeting continued.**

47. **APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODY, VICAR AND CHURCHWARDENS OF ST ANDREW'S CHARITY**

Councillors considered a request from St. Andrew's Church, Chippenham to nominate Mrs Margaret Harrison as their nominee to be a Trustee to fill the position held by the late Cllr Bambury. Mrs Harrison has been Clerk of the Trustees for many years and would hold office until April 2023.

**RESOLVED that:**

Mrs Margaret Harrison be nominated as trustee of the Vicar and Churchwardens of St Andrew's Charity to fill the position held by the late Cllr Bambury and shall hold office until April 2023.

48. **DEVELOPING THE NEW CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2022-26**

The Head of Corporate Support updated Councillors on the review process of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

**RESOLVED that:**

Councillors noted the process and timeframe that will be followed for the development of the new Corporate Strategic Plan.

49. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE**

The Head of Planning updated Councillors on the progress of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan since the last update in June 2021. It was noted that the new Neighbourhood Area now fully aligns with the new Chippenham Parish boundary and that a grant of £9000 had successfully been obtained from Locality.

**RESOLVED that:**

Councillors noted the report.

50. **COUNCILLORS FEEDBACK**

i. Councillor Jenny Budgell highlighted that the Chairman of Chippenham Borough Lands Charity is keen to speak to any interested Councillors to inform them of what the Charity do and to arrange a visit.

ii. The Chairman, Councillor John Scragg, updated on the activities of the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) and noted he had been re-elected Chairman of the WALC Executive Committee and re-elected as the Wiltshire representative at the National Assembly of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

iii. Councillor Nic Puntis, as Chairman of the Operational Flood Working Group North, highlighted that any incidents of flooding within the parish, particularly within new developments should be reported back to the Operational Flood Working Group North.

iv. The following Committee Membership changes were noted: Cllr George Simmonds on Strategy and Resources Committee for Cllr Chris Ruck, Cllr Robert Giles on Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee to fill a vacancy.

v. There were no ideas for potential CIL projects funded by the 85% of CIL that Wiltshire Council retain to be forwarded to Wiltshire Council.

vi. There were no Community Matters updates requested.

**51. ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION**

Councillors did not request any items for communication or with the Youth Council.

**52. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Full Council will take place at 7pm on Wednesday 24 November 2021.

The meeting concluded at 9.06pm

These Minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting

Signed on behalf of the Council as a true record of the meeting

Chairman:

Date:

Public Comments and Questions

At the invitation of the Chairman residents made the following comments and questions or they were read out by an officer on their behalf:

1. “Thank you Mr Mayor, I have got one statement and two questions tonight, the first statement is I wish to put on record my vote of thanks to the outside team this year, its been a challenging year for them, the weather has been unpredictable, its either been very hot or there has been a lot of rain. There were a lot of issues raised, but I just wanted to put on record my thanks to the outside staff who dealt with it in a very professional manner. My two questions relate to open spaces, the first one is in relation to open spaces in terms of cutting of the grass. Throughout the COVID period, what has become apparent is that many people want to use outside space more frequently, my question to the Council is when they look at their grass cutting exercise for next year, could they consider during the School holiday period, that 6-8 week period, where we have key open spaces such as in my Council division of Goodward Way, that they could be more frequently cut through that period? Because a number of residents did come back to me to say they would like to have used it more frequently but the grass was at a length that didn’t allow it, just a plea for that to be considered.  
The second question in relation to open spaces, a couple of years ago, I think it was a motion that I brought forward, it was in relation to open spaces and Chinese sky lanterns. I believe it’s my understanding that the Council at that time adopted a policy for the non-release of sky lanterns, but my question relates to whether the town council added the non-releasing of fireworks in open spaces. In addition to that, with the wording of that motion I think it only related at that time to open spaces owned by the town council. Obviously since then, the town council are managing open spaces which they don’t own but they do manage because of the devolution exercise coming down from Wiltshire Council. Could I ask them to revisit that policy and just confirm to me does it include fireworks? and will it include all the open spaces that the town council now manage?”
2. “I would like to convey my support for the three motions proposed under Item 11, and I’m gladdened to see these suggestions come up, as they show once again that our Councillors are striving to use their influence and resources to act on important social and green issues. I’m fully in support of the proposal to ask Wiltshire Council to commit to providing homes for Afghan refugees. I work for Doorway, an organisation who many will know support those who are experiencing homelessness or a vulnerable housing situation, and whilst I am no expert in the complex needs of refugees I know that there are local services such as ours that could help to provide a network of support for displaced people. I have also witnessed the generosity of members of the public towards those who are experiencing hardship and believe that the community and community-based organisations could be mobilised in support. Secondly, I’d like to strongly endorse the motion to seek involvement and dialogue with Wiltshire Council planning team as early as possible to understand fully the spatial implications of the revised plan for a road and associated housing to the South of Chippenham. I would like to see Wiltshire Council urged to rethink the priorities for this scheme with the necessary overarching focus on their responsibilities to minimise carbon emissions and to protect the countryside from further destruction, as recognised and supported by Chippenham residents and councillors. I fear that despite Wiltshire Council’s forced-hand response to the ‘Future Chippenham’ consultation, they will continue to progress

the revised plan in the least climate and community friendly way, concentrating on rescuing what remains of the original strategic and financial objectives, instead of proactively recalibrating aims around less car dependency, more brownfield capacity, and the need to determine and respond carefully over time to actual housing need - not arbitrary, unjustified growth targets. I think a close association with Town Councillors, some of whom have worked on Chippenham's Neighbourhood plan, would provide a much-needed lens of local knowledge, and the scrutiny and transparency to help prevent the sense of predetermination of plans that we have seen to date. Finally, I think it makes absolute sense to set up a Climate Emergency fund for access by not-for-profit and other organisations without the available means to pursue decarbonisation and adaptation projects. With no central government funding to draw on forthcoming, and scientists and meteorologists confirming not only the effects of climate change but acceleration of these effects often in line or exceeding the upper end of expectation, I believe we must do whatever is within our reach to enable rapid change and to foster a culture in which responding to the climate and ecological emergencies are treated with proportionate urgency and a sense of shared purpose."

3. "I'm starting to get frustrated with Chippenham Town Council, I don't think it is the Councillors or the staff that I deal with when sending in my questions or attending meetings as they are always positive and helpful, so who is it who doesn't want the best for Chippenham? Back when the Council Tax increase came out earlier in the year I was depressed like many others, people can't afford to eat or heat their houses and Chippenham Town Council was raising Council Tax to the maximum with an unresearched comment made that people who were struggling would get help. Imagine my astonishment when at the next Council meeting I attended the topic on the agenda was the excess money the Council had and unspent CIL money that was used for normal budgeted items so why was Council tax put up? I had been wondering when to raise the above so it doesn't happen next year and as it is in the information pack today that Council Tax would go up by 5.5% if vital changes are made it seemed like a good time. At June's Town Council meeting many of us were sat feeling very cold as the air conditioning was on full power, How much money and carbon emissions would have been saved over the summer if jackets were removed and used less electricity on air conditioning during a Climate Emergency? I was also concerned at the plastic bottles of water in a prominent place being used two years into a climate emergency, with a water fountain you would already be seeing the savings. Then there was the consultancy fee for the Neeld Hall to gather information when it would take 5 minutes to draft and create a survey. If I see all this in one visit to a Council meeting how much more money is being wasted by Chippenham Town Council not being efficient that could be freed up to invest in tackling the climate and ecological emergencies and setting the example for residents? Looking through the proposals in answer to the Ecological emergency to me it seems like somebody just made the total as high as possible to get out of doing the work by saying it will be a 5.5% increase in Council Tax. £5,200 each to update the two Procurement Policy that should have been updated 2 years ago when the climate emergency was declared. Over £80,000 for machinery and alternatives to glyphosate and whatever other highly toxic chemicals you are using. Again a lot of Councils did this as part of declaring a Climate Emergency eg Frome in January 2019, is this figure from discussions with other Councils that have over 2 years of experience like Frome? How much could be removed as it is part of business as usual eg legal advice and trees covered in previous meetings and the Monkton Park maintenance plan? Agenda item 13 says the money is already budgeted for the Corporate Priorities which are covered in this agenda item too so there is budgeted

money available to tackle the ecological emergency why isn't it being used rather than lazily threatening to increase Council Tax. Where is the list of savings from mowing less and lower energy bills, even if there is an initial outlay for future years there are gains, where are these figures and I presume you still have excess money? If we had an e-newsletter like all other Wiltshire towns the Council can collaborate with residents and businesses further reducing costs. Refashion your town's posters in Kandu Arts are a perfect example of the work already being done. Squeaky Solutions, Cousin Norman's refills and school uniform swap, Just Because You Love It, eco products and refills all thriving through the pandemic showing the importance of the climate emergency to the residents of Chippenham. Ramblers, cyclists and running groups all providing a starting point for the Corporate priorities if we work together. What has the Council achieved over the two years since declaring a climate emergency, according to the report and website it's just arranging a few webinars?"

4. "Thank you Chair, its good to see so many new ideas coming from the new Councillors tonight, I hope everyone is ready to lay their cards on the table and demonstrate whether they are progressive or a dinosaur. At the last Full Council meeting on 16 June I asked the Council to confirm that no officers were paid in excess of £50,000 a year as such information was not published in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code. The reply I got was to quote 'the Council will be publishing this information on the Council's website in due course' that was it and it has now appeared. I'd like to ask the Council to re-visit that answer and re-phrase it appropriately. Something like, 'oh dear, we're very sorry, it seems we've dropped the ball and missed some vital information, we'll publish it immediately and make sure that the officers responsible receive immediate re-training and make sure this never happens again'. Then perhaps, we could have some confidence in the capability of the relevant officers. If that answer was given, I wouldn't be here tonight asking the questions I'm asking. This is information that must be published, and clearly it hasn't been published for a number of years. I've worked in regulated industries both financial services and medical device manufacturing and something that must be done, cannot be ignored or brushed under the carpet, particularly when its pointed out. This inevitably leads to additional questions on how this happened for so long, how it wasn't noticed by relevant officers and how was it missed by auditors. How many other items that must be published are not being made public? at a quick glance I have found one so far. What else is being done to ensure that this does not happen again and that competent people are placed in charge of compliance for the Local Government requirements? Thank you".

Written responses to public questions asked at the Full Council meeting on 22 September 2021:

1. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 22 September 2021, your comments have been noted. On 26 September 2018, the Town Council agreed to add a condition of venue hire banning the release of Chinese Lanterns and Helium balloons from Town Council venues and open spaces. There was a Councillor motion agreed at Full Council on 27 November 2019 regarding fireworks, the draft policy was written and agreed under delegated authority during the time that meetings were not able to take place due to the COVID pandemic. Full Council 22 July 2020 Minute 13 refers. The Policy states: *'Chippenham Town Council does not support the releasing of fireworks from any open space or building which it owns or manages. This is with the exception of organised displays which have been previously agreed by the Town Council.'*
2. Thank you for your comments made at Full Council on 22 September 2021, the Councillor motions were agreed by Full Council, you can read the detail in the minutes - Full Council 22/09/21 Minute 49 refers.
3. Thank you for your comments made at Full Council on 22 September 2021. The process of setting the precept each year which forms part of Council tax is decided by Councillors who are informed and discuss all aspects of the Council's budget. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money must be spent within five years and can only be spent on qualifying items. Officers raised the unspent amount of CIL to ensure that it is used before its expiry. The Council meeting in June was under COVID restrictions, in normal times the Council does provide water in jugs and glasses, however to ensure the meeting was safe we provided individual plastic bottles if required. The Council has achieved a great deal over the last two years since declaring a Climate Emergency, the process is transparent and meeting notes are available to read [HERE](#). The Climate Emergency Advisory Group is a collaboration between Councillors and members of the public who have relevant skills and knowledge.
4. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 22 September 2021. The Town Council must clarify that your statement and public question was not factually correct. The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 applies to parish councils with a gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is the higher) exceeding £200,000. The Code sets out recommended practice for the publication of information by councils with this gross annual income or expenditure. Part 2 of the Code is recommended practice but not mandatory for parish councils with a gross annual income or expenditure between £200,000 and £6.5M and is mandatory for parish councils a gross annual income or expenditure in excess of £6.5M. Therefore, where the Council falls into between the £200k and £6.5M, as Chippenham Town Council does, it is recommended practice to publish but not a statutory requirement. Chippenham Town Council officers are well qualified and trained, and aim to continually improve. Officers looked into this matter and identified any information that the guidance recommends that we should publish.